AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-3 (Cancelled)

Claim 4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea, an imidazole ring-containing compound or an indole ring-containing compound.

Claims 5-10 (Cancelled)

Claim 11. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting a hepatitis C virus (HCV) in a sample by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe monoclonal antibody, comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution containing (a) an anionic surfactant and (b) at least one agent selected from the group consisting of an amphoteric surfactant, a nonionic surfactant and a protein denaturant; such that the virus particle is disrupted, the virus antigen is exposed or released such that the virus antigen is denatured; and antibodies against the virus antigen, if present in the sample, are inactivated; and

(2) ~~adding the treated sample containing treatment solution to reaction buffer~~ adding the treated sample to a probe monoclonal antibody that has been immobilized to a solid support, wherein the concentration of the surfactants used during the treatment step are diluted to an extent that said surfactants exhibit little or no denaturing properties to the probe monoclonal antibody, adding a reaction buffer to said treatment sample and probe monoclonal antibody and detecting the denatured virus antigen by immunoassay using the probe monoclonal antibody.

Claim 12. (Withdrawn) A virus assay method, characterized by using a sample treating method according to any one of claims 1 to 10 and reacting it with a probe which specifically recognizes a virus antigen, for detection or quantization of the presence of the virus antigen.

Claims 13-33 (Cancelled)

Claim 34. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea.

Claims 35 and 36 (Cancelled)

Claim 37. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 11, wherein the at least one agent consists of the amphoteric surfactant and one agent selected from either the nonionic surfactant or the protein denaturant, and wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic surfactant to the probe monoclonal antibody is reduced by the amphoteric surfactant and the one agent selected from the nonionic surfactant or the protein denaturant.

Claim 38. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 37, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea.

Claims 39 and 40 (Cancelled)

Claim 41. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein the at least one agent consists of the amphoteric surfactant , the nonionic surfactant and the protein denaturant, and wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic surfactant to the probe monoclonal antibody is reduced by the amphoteric surfactant, the nonionic surfactant, and the protein denaturant.

Claim 42. (Currently Amended) A method for detecting a hepatitis B virus (HBV) in a sample by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe monoclonal antibody, comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution containing (a) an anionic surfactant and (b) at least one agent selected from the group

consisting of an amphoteric surfactant, a nonionic surfactant and a protein denaturant; such that the virus particle is disrupted, the virus antigen is exposed or released such that the virus antigen is denatured; and antibodies against the virus antigen, if present in the sample, are inactivated; and

(2) ~~adding the treated sample containing treatment solution to reaction buffer~~ adding the treated sample to a probe monoclonal antibody that has been immobilized to a solid support, wherein the concentration of the surfactants used during the treatment step are diluted to an extent that said surfactants exhibit little or no denaturing properties to the probe monoclonal antibody, adding a reaction buffer to said treatment sample and probe monoclonal antibody and detecting the denatured virus antigen by immunoassay using the probe monoclonal antibody.

Claim 43. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 42, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea, an imidazole ring-containing compound or an indole ring-containing compound.

Claim 44. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 42, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea.

Claim 45. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 42, wherein the at least one agent consists of the amphoteric surfactant and one agent selected from either the nonionic surfactant or the protein denaturant, and wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic surfactant to the probe monoclonal antibody is reduced by the amphoteric surfactant and the one agent selected from either the nonionic surfactant or the protein denaturant.

Claim 46. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 45, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea.

Claim 47. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 42, wherein the at least one agent consists of the amphoteric surfactant , the nonionic surfactant and the protein denaturant, and wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic

surfactant to the probe monoclonal antibody is reduced by the amphoteric surfactant, the nonionic surfactant, and the protein denaturant.